

# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



# THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600 24 March 1966

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ARMY review(s) completed.

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State Dept. review completed

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

According to Western press reports, DRV party first secretary Le Duan is in Peking en route to Moscow as head of the North Vietnamese party delegation to the 23rd Congress of the CPSU. Le Duan's presence in Moscow will probably be cited by the Soviets as further evidence of Peking's growing isolation in the Communist world. Political agitation continued in the northern provinces of South Vietnam today with a general strike in Da Nang remaining in effect and Hue Radio broadcasting bitter antigovernment statements. Saigon, however, remains quiet, although rumors of impending political agitation persist.

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Viet Cong forces, possibly striking in battalion strength or larger, yesterday launched a series of heavy attacks against government positions in the vicinity of the ARVN 5th Division headquarters at Phu Cuong, the capital of Binh Duong Province; US 1st Infantry Division troops have launched reaction/ pursuit operations to recover an ARVN tank believed captured by the Viet Cong during yesterday's en-(Paras. 1-2). Communist guerrillas gagements also launched two attacks last night, one in battalion strength, against a regional forces company size garrison in Quang Duc Province near the Cambodian border (Para. 3). ROK Operation TIGER V reported sharp, sporadic contact with the Viet Cong throughout most of yesterday in Binh Dinh Province, 15 miles north of Qui Nhon (Para. 4). USMC/ ARVN Operation TEXAS/LIEN KET 28 continues to inflict heavy Viet Cong personnel and weapons losses in northeast Quang Ngai Province (Para, 5). enemy resistance has been reported in the opening phase of ARVN Operation DAN CHI 212 in the delta province of Ba Xuyen (Para. 6). Multibattalion allied task force elements have terminated Operation SILVER CITY against Viet Cong War Zone "D" after 16 days (Para. 7).

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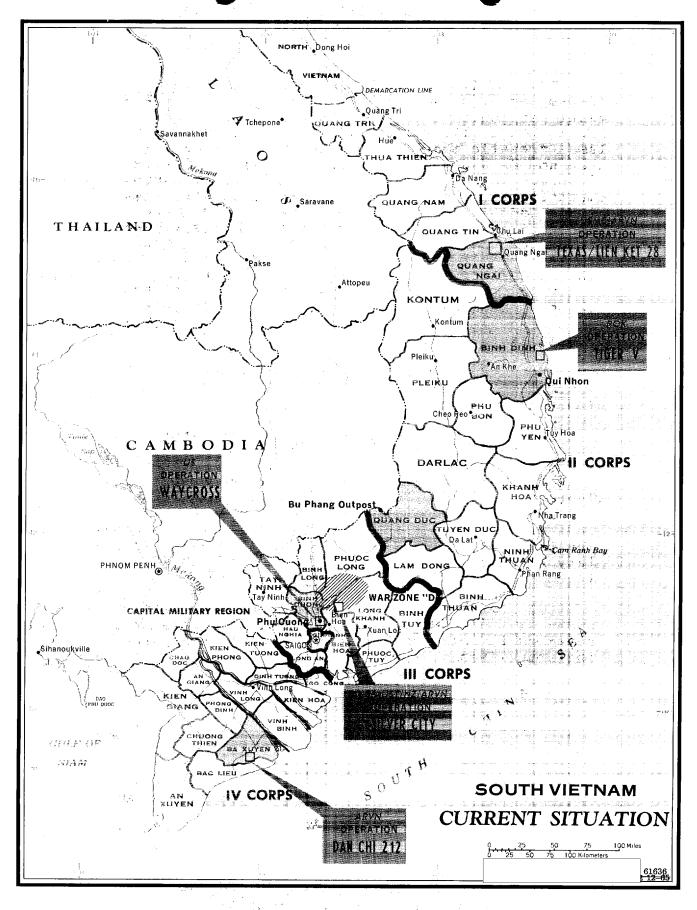
The mayor of Saigon has arrived in Hue on a government mission to try to get General Thi out of I Corps (Para. 1). Political agitation, although less frenetic than yesterday, continued today in Hue and Da Nang, and "struggle groups" continued to broadcast bitter attacks on the Saigon government (Paras. 2 and 3). There are reports of possible Buddhist attempts to organize in II Corps, and continued rumors of efforts to foment strikes in Saigon, possibly by unsavory elements seeking to stir up anti-American sentiment (Paras. 4-6).

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The military Directorate is to meet on 25 March concerning the problem in I Corps (Para. 8). Buddhist leaders, meanwhile, have continued their attempts to line up support from other religious and political groups (Para. 9).

- III. <u>Military Developments in North Vietnam:</u> There is nothing of significance to report.
- IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.
- V. Communist Political Developments: According to Western press reports, DRV party first secretary Le Duan is in Peking en route to Moscow for the 23rd Congress of the CPSU (Paras. 1-4).
- VI. Other Major Aspects: Repairs currently under way on the Hanoi-Vinh railroad are apparently designed to restore this line to use by heavy rolling stock (Paras. 1 and 2).

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#### I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- In Binh Duong Province, an unknown number of Viet Cong dressed in ARVN uniforms infiltrated and attacked an ARVN cavalry-unit housing compound near the provincial capital of Phu Cuong, about 12 miles north of Saigon. Concurrently, and in the same general vicinity, other Viet Cong units attacked an artillery- and tank-training center and five nearby After heavy fighting, the attackers withoutposts. drew, leaving behind 42 dead, three captives, and 13 crew-served weapons. Government losses in the series of actions were placed at 27 killed, 48 wounded, and In addition, two ARVN M-113 armored per-19 missing. sonnel carriers and one M-41 tank were damaged, while another M-41 tank was reported missing and believed captured by the Viet Cong. US Army intelligence believes that the Phu Cuong actions may have involved elements of the Viet Cong Phu Loi Battalion and 272nd Main Force Regiment, both of which are known to be operating in this general area.
- 2. Three battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division on a search operation (WAYCROSS) to locate the missing M-41 tank have established contact with enemy units near Phu Cuong, resulting in initial US losses of two killed and 17 wounded. Viet Cong losses are unknown.
- Viet Cong forces launched two attacks last night against a regional forces company-strength garrison at Bu Phang outpost in Quang Duc Province near the Cambodian border. The first assault, consisting of mortar, recoilless-rifle, and small-arms fire, resulted in government losses of four killed and 23 wounded in addition to two bunkers destroyed. Shortly thereafter, an estimated Viet Cong battalion mounted a second attack against the outpost, but the timely arrival of ARVN heliborne reinforcements forced the enemy to disengage. ARVN reports indicate that 150 Viet Cong were killed and 15 weapons captured in the two actions. According to the latest available information, the reaction force has re-established light contact with the attackers in the vicinity of Bu Phang.

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#### Allied Operations

killed and 35 wounded.

4. Operation TIGER V by four ROK battalions
15 miles north of Qui Nhon, in central coastal Binh
Dinh Province, reported sharp sporadic contacts
throughout most of yesterday with Communist forces
in the operational sweep area.

188 Viet Cong were killed, 117 captured,
and 262 suspects apprehended, bringing total enemy
losses in the three-day ground sweep to 214 killed,
117 captured, and 282 suspects apprehended. Eleven
Koreans were killed and 26 wounded in yesterday's
actions, raising cumulative ROK casualties to 12

- 5. USMC/ARVN Operation TEXAS/LIEN KET 28 continues to take a heavy toll of Viet Cong personnel and material in northeast Quang Ngai Province. To date, 354 enemy troops have been killed (US body count), two captured, and 124 weapons seized. Friendly casualties thus far stand at 64 killed (59 US) and 196 wounded (162 US).
- 6. Heavy contact was reported today with an estimated Viet Cong battalion during the opening phase of Operation DAN CHI 212, a reaction-type search-and-destroy ground sweep by reinforced battalion-strength elements of the ARVN 21st Division in Ba Xuyen Province. Preliminary results place enemy losses at 116 killed and 29 weapons captured, as against government casualties of 13 killed and 21 wounded.
- 7. Multibattalion US/Australian/New Zealand/ARVN task force elements have terminated Operation SILVER CITY, a 16-day ground offensive against Viet Cong War Zone D, 30 to 40 miles north-northeast of Saigon. Supported by a total of 667 tactical air strikes and B-52 strategic bombing raids, allied troops killed 347 Viet Cong, captured six, and šeized 151 individual and crew-served weapons. Friendly casualties totaled 27 killed (24 US) and 255 wounded (241 US).

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### II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. The mayor of Saigon, Van Van Cua, reportedly arrived yesterday in Hue where he has been sent by the Ky government to persuade General Thi to return to Saigon, a task Cua expects will take about four days. Cua has allegedly been authorized to offer Thi "anything he wants," including command of another corps area, provided he leaves I Corps.
- 2. Political agitation continued in I Corps today, although apparently in a somewhat calmer public vein than yesterday. The only political activity noted in Hue was a meeting of some 300 students at the university, where criticism of both the Ky government and the US was voiced, including a charge that the US is "now making the decisions." Hue radio continued to broadcast bitter statements against the government, including one accusation of deceit by Premier Ky in his weekend remarks and retractions concerning Buddhist patriotism. A Buddhist march, evidently postponed from yesterday, is reportedly scheduled for 27 March.
- started yesterday remained in effect today, at least in part through the efforts of "struggle group" members who operated as "goon" squads, setting up roadblocks and attempting to keep workers from their jobs. Otherwise the city appeared uneager for political agitation.

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the Directorate will hold another special meeting at 10:00 a.m. on 25 March (9:00 p.m. EST on 24 March). The purpose of the meeting will be to consider how the situation in I Corps should be handled, although it is possible that other changes or contingency plans may be discussed. According to US observers, the "Popular Struggle Force" in Da Nang, possibly anticipating repressive measures, has broadcast instructions to the populace for thwarting attempts to terrorize and sabotage the people's struggle by "gangsters" allegedly being sent from Saigon to Da Nang.

The US Embassy in Saigon now reports that a meeting took place on 22 March between certain ranking Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, and representatives of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects. meeting presumably represented another Buddhist attempt to line up other religions behind its call for a more representative government. Catholic leader Father Quynh reportedly told the meeting that while the Catholics are not entirely satisfied with the Ky government and would be willing to join efforts to seek a better regime, they do not intend to engage in antigovernment activity or disturbances Certain leaders of the Naat the present time. tionalist Party in the Da Nang area have also told US officials that the party does not endorse the antigovernment activity of Buddhists and students in I Corps, even though it does not like the Saigon government, which it considers corrupt. Meanwhile, a Buddhist newspaper in Saigon today carried instructions to the newly formed Buddhist political party--Vietnamese Buddhist Forces--to carry out orders and avoid "misunderstandings between friendly organizations," believed to refer to Catholics and other groups.

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	111.	MILITAR	Y DEVELOI	PMEN	TS IN	NORTH	VIETNAM	
	1.	There is	nothing	o:f	signi	ficance	e to repo	ort.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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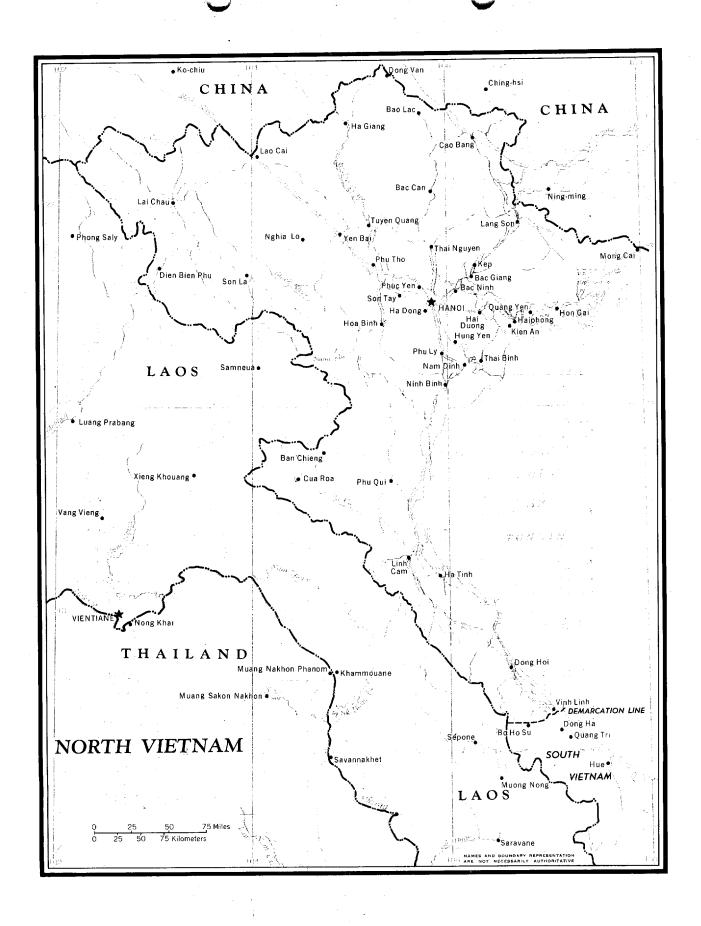
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#### V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- 1. North Vietnamese party first secretary Le Duan, according to Western press reports, is now in Peking prior to his departure for Moscow as head of the Hanoi party delegation to the Soviet 23rd Party Congress. A special Chinese Communist IL-18 transport flight from Hanoi to Peking on 22 March possibly carried Le Duan. Hanoi has not yet made any mention of his trip.
- 2. Le Duan is regarded as the leader of the hard-line element within the North Vietnamese party and in the past has taken a pro-Peking stand on certain issues involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute. He led special delegations to Peking and Moscow in 1964 and 1965. If he does lead the North Vietnamese delegation to Moscow, the Soviets will cite this as evidence of further isolation of Peking from the world's Communist parties. The Soviets will want to treat the Vietnam issue in the Sino-Soviet dispute with circumspection so as not to embarrass the Vietnamese and thereby endanger the gains Moscow has made with Hanoi.
- 3. The Chinese would undoubtedly have preferred that Hanoi not send any delegation to Moscow or that the delegation be low level. They may feel confident, nevertheless, that Le Duan will counter any tendency to use the Vietnam war as an excuse for attacking Peking at the Moscow meeting. Le Duan will probably confine his public remarks to the Vietnam war, and will avoid any statements that could be taken as a slap at Peking.
- 4. One Western press report states that Le Duan will remain in Peking until 26 March. If true, it would suggest that he is engaged in substantive discussions with the Chinese, probably in part on Sino-Vietnamese cooperation in the Vietnam war. He will probably be seeking to ensure continued Chinese assistance and will attempt to persuade Peking not to further impede the flow of Soviet aid to Hanoi.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS
1. Some of the repairs on the Hanoi-Vinh rail-
1. Some of the repairs on the Hanoi-Vinn rail- road, which transports goods supporting North Viet-
nam's war effort in the South, are apparently de-
signed to restore this line to use by heavy rolling
stock.
photography
showed steel-plate girders and trusses near
bridges at Ninh Binh and Qui Vinh. These girders
and trusses were probably assembled at the Thai
Ngyuen iron and steel works. Photography of this
plant has shown such assemblies stored outside vari-
ous shops on the premises.
O White is the first time that quah bridge no
2. This is the first time that such bridge repair facilities have been observed on the DRV rail-
road system, In the past, bridge repairs have in- volved the construction of makeshift timber struc-
tures, probably with low weight limitations.
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